

ABSTRACT

Language is vital in communication between people. People understand each other through shared knowledge between the speaker and the hearer. It is a major mechanism within the process of social construction, seen as an instrument for consolidating, manipulating concepts, seek attention, create relationships in the area of power, and use it as tool to control the society. Anchored in Critical Discourse Analysis theoretically, this study shed light on the crucial use of language in the society. The study sought to explain specific linguistic ways in which language is used to represent an instrument of control and manifest symbolic power in the Kenya's Building Bridges initiative speeches. The study developed and proposed various strategies of (de) legitimization employed by political leaders in Kenya to justify their course of action regarding the Building Bridges initiative. The study was guided by two objectives; to analyze how political actors (de) legitimize the Building Bridges Initiative in Kenya and to analyze how political actors, use language to create a Kenyan identity through the Building Bridges Initiative discourse. Qualitative research methodology was used in this study, of which the descriptive survey method was employed for the analysis of data. YouTube videos of speeches made by specific political actors regarding the Building Bridges Initiative since November 2019 to 2021 were purposively sampled, transcribed and analyzed in their written form. De(legitimization) strategies were identified until saturation point was reached where no new strategies were being generated without resulting to redundancy. These were then categorized into thematic areas in accordance to the objectives of the study. The study established that strategies used by politicians in (de)legitimizing BBI were; authorization, rationalization, moral evaluation, and mythopoeic. It also established that majority of the speakers used language to attract attention, and advance ideologies that created a Kenyan identity. The study found that Kenya's identity was to a large extent shaped negatively in the BBI discourse with only two out of the six having a positive orientation. These included: Kenya as a nation in need of national conversation, Kenya as a country struggling with tribalism and corruption and Kenya as a peaceful country with fairness and inclusivity. The information gathered in this study is useful to linguists since it provides them with ways to understand the language of politicians world over. Politicians may use language with hidden meaning that needs unravelling. Therefore, this study offers some of the ways of understanding and disambiguating what the politicians really say in their speeches. From the findings of this research, the researcher suggests the following areas for interested scholars: A study on creation of identity using other theories for example politeness theory, speech acts theory, or conceptual metaphor theory.